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## TOBACCO AND SCHOLARSHIP

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A recent investigation in a large high school of the Middle West offers additional material for discussion in connection with the interesting question of the relationship between the scholarship of students and their use of tobacco. The facts were supplied by the one hundred and three boys of the Senior class. The percentage of error in the statements given is probably small, because in the first place the friendly relations between the instructor and his pupils were favorable incentives to truthful answers to the questions that were asked; in the second place, the boys were assured that any information which they might give would be used for statistical purposes only, and would not be used in any way to embarrass or to discredit them; in the third place, the answers were secured by a personal interview with each boy and not by the usual questionnaire method.

The following questions were asked:

- (1) Do you smoke now, or have you ever smoked, cigarettes, cigars, or pipe?
- (2) How old were you when you smoked for the first time?
- (3) How long did you continue to smoke?

In addition, many, though not all, of the boys were asked to tell why they refrained from smoking; why they smoke now; or why they stopped smoking after having begun it.

The instructor then secured from the official school records the general average in scholarship for each of the one hundred and three boys for the first term of the present year—a period of about five months from September, 1912, to February, 1913. From these two sources—the answers of the boys and the official records of the school—the following summary was made:

1. Total number of boys included in the report (class of 1913), 103.
2. Number of boys who smoke, 45; or 43.7 per cent of the total.
3. Number of boys who do not smoke, 58; or 56.3 per cent of the total.

4. Average scholarship record for the first term (1912-13) for the total number (103), 78.3 per cent.
5. Average scholarship record for the first term (1912-13) for those who smoke (45), 77.2 per cent.
6. Average scholarship record for the first term (1912-13) for the non-smokers (58), 79.1 per cent.
7. Number of smokers with scholarship record over 90 per cent, 2 (1.9 per cent of the total; 25 per cent of the group).
8. Number of non-smokers with scholarship record over 90 per cent, 6 (5.8 per cent of the total; 75 per cent of the group).
9. Number of smokers with scholarship record below 70 per cent, 8 (7.8 per cent of the total; 61.5 per cent of the group).
10. Number of non-smokers with scholarship record below 70 per cent, 5 (4.9 per cent of the total; 38.5 per cent of the group).
11. Average scholarship record for the 8 failures among the smokers, 66.9 per cent.
12. Average scholarship record for the 5 failures among the non-smokers, 69.4 per cent.
13. Average scholarship record for those who have never smoked (21), 81.6 per cent.
14. Average scholarship record for those who formerly smoked and then quit (37), 77.7 per cent.
15. The first five in rank among the whole number (103) are non-smokers.
16. The lowest six in rank among the whole number (103) are smokers.
17. The highest three in rank among the whole number (103) have never smoked.
18. Of the upper one-fifth of the class (21 out of 103),
  - (a) 8 are smokers—7.8 per cent of the total, 38.1 per cent of the group.
  - (b) 13 are non-smokers—12.6 per cent of the total, 61.9 per cent of the group.
19. Of the upper one-half of the class (53 out of 103),
  - (a) 21 are smokers—20.4 per cent of the total, 39.6 per cent of the group.
  - (b) 32 are non-smokers—31.1 per cent of the total, 60.4 per cent of the group.
20. Of the lower one-half of the class (50 out of 103),
  - (a) 24 are smokers—23.3 per cent of the total, 48 per cent of the group.
  - (b) 26 are non-smokers—25.2 per cent of the total, 52 per cent of the group.
21. Number of present smokers who began to smoke at 13 years or under, 18.
22. Scholarship of present smokers who began to smoke at 13 years or under (18), 75.3 per cent.
23. Number of present smokers who began to smoke at 14 years or over, 27.
24. Scholarship of present smokers who began to smoke at 14 years or over (27), 78.5 per cent.

It is worthy of note that in every one of the comparisons between the class of smokers and the class of non-smokers, the advantage in scholarship lies with the non-smokers. In the first place the general average for the fifty-eight non-smokers is 1.9 per cent higher than the general average for the forty-five smokers. Even the failures among the non-smokers, with an average of 69.4 per cent, rank higher than the smokers who fail, for the latter have an average of only 66.9 per cent. In each of the groups where comparison was made, the non-smokers make the better showing, as is evident in Table I.

TABLE I

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	90 per cent or Above	Upper $\frac{1}{2}$ of Class	Upper $\frac{1}{4}$ of Class	Lower $\frac{1}{4}$ of Class	Failures	First Five	Last Six
<i>Non-smokers—</i>							
Expected percentage.....	56.3	56.3	56.3	56.3	56.3	56.3	56.3
Actual percentage.....	75.0	61.9	60.4	52.0	38.5	100.0	0.0
<i>Smokers—</i>							
Expected percentage.....	43.7	43.7	43.7	43.7	43.7	43.7	43.7
Actual percentage.....	25.0	38.1	39.6	48.0	61.5	0.0	100.0

The "expected percentage" is the same as the percentage of the smokers or of the non-smokers in the total number. If there were no alternative causes, this general percentage would be uniform throughout all the groups. For that reason it is called the "expected percentage." Note that in the higher groups—1, 2, 3, and 6 of the table—the non-smokers exceed the expected percentage and in the lower groups—4, 5, and 7 of the table—they fall below the expected percentage, whereas the smokers reverse this record by falling below the expected in the higher groups and by exceeding the expected in the lower groups.

In regard to the second question—"How old were you when you smoked for the first time?"—the answers show that some boy yielded to the temptation at almost every age from six to eighteen. Out of the total number of one hundred and three, eighty-two have smoked at some time or other. Thirty-seven of these have abandoned the practice. The age of sixteen was the most dangerous age, as Table II shows.

Some of the former smokers report that one experience with tobacco was enough for them, while others report that they have continued the practice of using tobacco for years.

The reasons given for refraining from smoking altogether or for discontinuing the practice are most interesting. Several boys state that they promised their parents to abstain and that they have kept the pledge. A pledge to mother or father seems to be a good anchor for a boy. Some boys stopped smoking because they realized that the practice was injurious; still others say that "there was nothing in it" for them. One boy frankly says that he was caught and that he has had no desire since; another says naïvely that smoking made him sick. The influence of a good companion is shown in the frank confession of a boy who reports that it was through the good counsel of a classmate that he was led to abandon the practice.

TABLE II

Age	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Began to smoke. .	1	2	0	3	8	4	11	4	11	11	14	11	2

The number involved in the present inquiry is too small to warrant any dogmatic statements or to justify any positive conclusions. The facts, however, do raise certain queries in the mind. For example, one wonders whether the habit of smoking is the cause of low scholarship, or whether there are several concomitant causes. One wonders, again, whether there may not be some common cause out of which issue independently both smoking and low scholarship. There comes a time to many boys when they no longer hold themselves to such strict adherence to their ideals as formerly; when they do not keep as firm a grip upon their conduct; when they do not hold themselves to such strict accountability; when they allow a certain relaxation of self-control. May not this lowering of personal standards of conduct, this relaxation of self-control, account for the habit of smoking, for low scholarship, and perhaps for other unfortunate habits of boys? If this be true, we are face to face again with the old problems. How can a boy be taught self-control? How can high ideals be made the ruling principles in the life of a boy?